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DHAHRAN SENDS
PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: EP SANG COMMANDER DISCUSSES IRAN, IRAQ

Classified by Consul General John Kincannon for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Prince Mishari bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) in the Eastern Province (EP), told the CG on June 5 that he did not think the "problem between the world and Iran," as he described it, would come to war. The Iranians are "merchants," he continued, experts at bargaining but not desiring war. Asked by the CG if the SANG was moving new troops to the Eastern Province as a contingency measure, Prince Mishari said that no significant movements were taking place, just "support for existing units." If the U.S. struck at Iranian nuclear facilities, he continued, the Iranians would certainly try to strike back at U.S. bases and interests, but he thought that Saudi Arabia would be able to "sit it out." Prince Mishari expressed concern about nuclear proliferation, however, noting that Egypt, Turkey, and others would likely try to develop nuclear weapons if Iran obtained the bomb. The CG asked if Saudi Arabia would as well, and Prince Mishari hedged: "It would take a lot of money and would therefore come at the expense of development, including jobs, education, health care, and quality of life of all Saudis. I would not favor it. I'm not in the leadership, but this is how I feel, we need to focus on developing our country."

¶2. (C) On Iraq, Prince Mishari expressed his concern that the new government and current political process would not be able to stop the violence. The central government in Baghdad, he opined, was losing influence, as the Kurds consolidated control in the north, the Shi'a and their Iranian allies took over in the south, and Zarqawi and his allies made gains in the Sunni heartland. "The only solution for Iraq," he continued, "is to find one of the big generals and have him create a new army to rule the country. Iraq should be under the rule of a good dictator, a cleaned-up Saddam."

¶3. (C) Comment and bio note: Prince Mishari has been SANG commander in the EP since 1984, and he seemed somewhat bored with his job. He has always been relatively free in expressing his opinions to Consulate interlocutors. Although he is the second-ranking royal in the Eastern Province in terms of protocol, he is not a member of the Al Saud inner circle. Prince Mishari does travel to Riyadh most weekends, however, giving him a chance to interact with his uncles, brothers, and cousins. His son, Turki, is a Riyadh-based businessman with a master's degree from the U.K. His daughter, Nouf, is a Smith College graduate who is finishing her master's in the U.K. and plans to return to the Kingdom to open a center for children with autism. End comment and bio note.

(APPROVED: KINCANNON)
OBERWETTER